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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4325
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2755
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2877
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1323
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2142
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2498
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2925
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5366
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2044
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000283

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ANGLICAN CHURCH FEUD TURNS VIOLENT; POLICE BACK
ZANU-PF BISHOP

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The head of the Anglican Church in Harare, Bishop Sebastian Bakare, met with poloff on March 31 to discuss the escalating feud and resultant violence stemming from the rivalry between the official Anglican Church and a rogue faction headed by Bakare's predecessor, expelled Bishop Nolbert Kunonga. During the past couple of weeks, police have barred Anglican Church worshippers from holding services and have used tear gas and riot police to break up congregations in Harare-area parishes. One bystander was sho as police haphazardly fired warning shots. Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri has unabashedly supported Kunonga. The MDC and ZANU-PF co-ministers of Home Affairs called in both rivals to quell the animosity, but ultimately deferred the matter to the Attorney General's office. END SUMMARY.

After Expulsion ZANU-PF Bishop Claims Properties

12. (C) The feud between the interim head of the Anglican Church in Harare, Bishop Sebastian Bakare, and his predecessor, former head Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, began when the Anglican Church expelled and excommunicated Kunonga in May 2008 after he unilaterally attempted to withdraw the diocese of Harare from the Anglican Church's Central Africa Province. Kunonga lost the support of church parishioners for being openly-supportive of ZANU-PF policies, a passionate critic of homosexuality, and a Mugabe apologist. Kunonga's close political ties earned him ownership of a seized farm as well as the support of Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri. Bakare told poloff that he had a copy of a letter from Kunonga to Chihuri, thanking him for his police support.

13. (C) Following Kunonga's expulsion, he attempted to create his own church, the "Church of Zimbabwe," and claimed personal ownership of the approximately 70 Anglican churches in Zimbabwe. Bakare said that Kunonga has absolutely no credible claim to these properties, as the Anglican Church had held title to them since 1870. Various cases have been brought before Zimbabwe's High Court to legally resolve the issue; however, the High Court has failed to make a definitive ruling. Bakare said that the case had become a joke, as often times Kunonga's lawyers failed to appear. He believed that political pressure had prevented the court from upholding the Anglican Church's case. The High Court did provide the recommendation that the two rivals share use of church facilities, dividing access into morning and evening segments. However, Kunonga did not approve of this compromise and had told his supporters to lock all buildings.

Bakare, in turn, has refused to be barred and has aggressively pushed forward, gaining access to some churches. Aggressively pushed forward, gaining access to some churches and urging his supporters to hold services outside of locked parishes.

Police Intimidate and Teargas Worshippers

14. (SBU) Riot police began appearing at Anglican services throughout Harare and surrounding areas during the past two weeks. At a Bakare sermon in Mabvuku last week, riot police attempted to remove him from the altar. Bakare refused to budge, though the police were able to drive his parishioners

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out of the church.

15. (SBU) Then on March 29 skirmishes broke out in Budiriro and Glenview between police and parishioners. One bystander was accidentally shot in the arm as police fired warning shots. Tear gas was used on worshippers in Glen Norah and Highfield, and in Glen View police were waiting inside a church to ambush parishioners. These locations are all Harare townships. Two priests, a church warden, and two church members have been arrested in relation to these incidents.

Ministry of Home Affairs Punts to the AG

16. (C) Bishop Bakare and Kunonga were invited to meet with the two Home Affairs ministers, Giles Mutsekwa of the MDC-T and Kembo Mohadi of ZANU-PF, on April 1. After being shown pictures of the police activities at churches, Bakare said that the two ministers -- under whom oversight of the police falls -- were "horrified." They intended to take steps to quell the police activities, but referred ultimate arbitration of the matter to the Attorney General's office. (COMMENT: The Attorney General is a ZANU-PF stalwart, and it would be unreasonable to believe he would support Bakare's position. END COMMENT.)

COMMENT

17. (C) Police involvement in the Anglican Church feud is an indication that law and order continues to be politicized in Zimbabwe. Despite co-management of Home Affairs by the MDC-T, Chihuri appears to still wield operational control of the police. MDC-T Home Affairs Minister Mutsekwa's actions and public statements indicate that he is carefully walking a political tightrope -- aware of police abuses, but leery of implementing change too rapidly and alienating himself. A test will be to see the police reaction to this Sunday's services, as well as a mass on April 9 where all the Anglican priests will be present for the annual rededication of their

vows. END COMMENT.

MCGEE